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ABSTRACT

The information age has introduced new methods of delivering educational materials to students. One method is two-way interactive television (ITV). As more schools utilize ITV, for distance education and other educational purposes, certain administrative, legal, and ethical issues need to be addressed. This paper focuses on human and ethical issues to consider before undertaking an ITV project, including: ownership of the course, videotapes, and materials; copyright issues; uses of videotapes; data/media manipulation; reuse of videotapes; reception and transmission of signals; class size; access to library resources; displacement of teachers; program marketing; admission of students; training faculty to use ITV; faculty selection; and student access to instructor. (Author/SWC)

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Ethical Issues Relating to Teaching via an Interactive Two-Way Television System (ITV)

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Abstract:

The information age has introduced new methods of delivering educational materials to students. One method is the two-way interactive television (ITV). As more schools utilize ITV, certain administrative, legal, and ethical issues need to be addressed. This presentation and paper address the ethical issues that should be considered before undertaking this adventure, including: ownership of course, videotapes, and materials; copyright issues; uses of videotapes; data/media manipulation; reception and transmission of signals; class size; access to library resources; displacement of teachers; marketing; admission of students; faculty selection; student access to instructor; and training faculty to use ITV.

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Ethical Issues Relating to Teaching via an Interactive Two-Way Television System (ITV)

The information age has introduced new methods of delivering materials to students and to classrooms. Distant education creates a unique opportunity for schools to extend their academic offerings to new audiences and at the same time address the issue of equal access. Distance education includes many formats, one of which is live, two-way interactive television.

Distance education means many things to many people. The world is changing rapidly as technology becomes a guiding force in information transmission, education, business, and training. Less than a decade ago, few states had any kind of real interactive learning capability. Now, every state is involved in this technology on some level.

Teachers, educators, and trainers are adopting new methods of teaching as older ways of instruction become outdated; or, they are using improved instructional strategies to supplement and enhance traditional teaching. Education has met these challenges by introducing computers, Internet, e-mail, fax machines, the information highway, and two-way interactive television into the schools. We are the telecommunications generation, the computer generation. It is important to remember that distance educators represent a **potentially** huge constituency — every school child, every college student, every business person, every adult is part of the national audiences whose informational and educational needs can be accommodated by means of distance education systems, methods, and practices.

Types of Activities

ITV can and is used for a number of types of activities. Educational institutions as well as businesses use ITV for meetings; this may be either a live, two-way interactive system or a video conference. ITV is also being used for continuing professional education programs and workshops, making it more convenient, especially for people living in rural locations, to fulfill their education requirements. In addition, business and industry introduce new products to branch offices, sales representatives, and even new customers via ITV or videoconferencing. The other type of activity, the one which is probably most familiar to many of us, is the offering of academic courses via interactive television systems.

Reasons to Use ITV

Two-way interactive television (ITV) is not a new concept, especially to rural teachers who rely on this medium to bring sources of diversity, updating, and advanced levels of course work to their students. This technology means rural schools can remain geographically isolated without becoming intellectually deprived. Television has introduced the power of images and sounds to an instructional process that was once primarily printed and written. Television is no longer accepted as just a means of entertainment, but also as an important part of classroom instruction. Today's students have grown up in a highly graphic environment, exposed to computers, television programs, network systems, and other technologies. ITV is a natural.

There are many reasons to use ITV in education, including the following:

- to increase accessibility to higher education;
- to offer a more comprehensive selection of upper division classes to meet the needs of transfer and non-traditional students;
- to enhance the offering of continuing education courses, workshops, and seminars;
- to increase class size in vital and essential courses;
- to improve retention of students by offering a variety of courses;
- to broaden students' backgrounds by exposing them to culturally diverse populations at other sites;
- to more effectively use time and travel money;
- to increase visibility and cohesiveness and reduce the cost of sharing invited campus speakers that may otherwise be cost prohibitive;
- to meet people's needs for convenience and quality in education;
- to enhance and expand learning by accommodating different learning styles; and
- to provide on-going education, especially when it is "the only game in town."

These justifications for ITV use in an academic setting are in no way all-inclusive. They do, however, provide a better understanding of why states, school districts, schools, departments, and instructors may find ITV an effective means of course delivery. As with all good things, inconsistencies and misuse may directly or indirectly impact ITV usage at a school. There are many issues which impact ITV — administrative, legal, ethical, or a combination of two or more. Ethics must be included in the ITV considerations.

Ethical Issues Related to ITV

Ethics may be defined as a point where the accepted rules no longer serve, and the decision maker must weigh values and reach a judgment in a situation which is different from situations faced previously, and this can certainly apply to ITV. Frequently, the administrative/legal/ethical issue is difficult to separate. It is the distance education philosophy that supports the "classroom without walls" concept. What is acceptable, legal, and ethical in a regular classroom is usually considered permissible in an ITV classroom; there are, however, certain issues in ITV which may or must be addressed separately from regular classroom instruction.

Ownership

Ownership of the course must be addressed. Once this ownership is established between faculty and administration, it is wise to have a letter of agreement between the parties which identifies the status of the course. In the event the faculty member leaves the institution, does the course (and materials) stay at the institution, or does the faculty member retain ownership? In the event there was no agreement regarding ownership, the institution may feel it has ownership of the course and materials because the professor developed the materials while in the employment of the institution.

Another issue to ponder has to do with ownership of videotapes of courses. Frequently, faculty will videotape each class session and retain this copy. Once again the question of ownership arises. One college professor has included the following statement in the course syllabi:

> **The classes will be videotaped. The videotape is the property of the instructor . . . .**

Some faculty have provided the blank videotapes to guard against the institution maintaining tapes were the institution's property because it supplied the tapes.

Ownerships of materials is a sensitive issue to many faculty. Because the course design and materials development requirements are different between ITV courses and traditional courses, a great deal of time may be involved in restructuring an existing course. When the faculty member leaves, who maintains ownership of the materials?

Copyright

Copyright — that beast which continually raises its ugly head to haunt teachers. Fair Use provisions of the Copyright Law are so complex even lawyers consider some areas confusing and vague. On January 1, 1978, the General Revision

of the Copyright Law went into effect. It has been determined that ITV materials are bound by copyright regulations.

The following recommendations regarding use of print and non-print materials with ITV should be considered:

- When in doubt, get permission. Stay within the confines of the law, even if you suspect this comes under the Fair Use provisions.
- Although Fair Use guidelines relating to ITV are still not clearly delineated, it is wise to seek permission to use materials. The technology is relatively new, so there have been only a few cases in course which have been precedent-setting decisions. Even though courts have looked at Fair Use cases on an individual basis, the gray area(s) still exist.
- Many telecourses are made with the intent to sell and distribute multiple copies, which put these telecourses outside the interpretations of Fair Use. Give careful consideration to purchasing telecourses and making them available to others.
- Be careful, be cautious. Most copyright holders will give or sell permission for a license for copying and transmission, so pay the fee and pass the cost on to the "customers," usually the students. It is advisable to keep exact records of permission received and fees paid.

Institutions should develop policies and procedures to address copyright issues, disseminate these guidelines and policies, and implement them through on-going training sessions.

Videotape

The issue of videotaping classes and students has been discussed in great length, but it is still a gray area to many. The issue is **not** whether a videotape is made of each class session, but what the professor does with the tape that constitutes the critical issue.

Although it is not imperative to have signed permission of the students to tape the class, it is a courtesy to inform students that each class or certain classes will be videotaped. In the event these tapes may be viewed by people who are not

members of the class, the instructor should definitely secure signed permission from each student. As a safeguard, this may be done as part of the introductory procedures during the first class session.

Another videotaping issue is that of removing the videotapes from the classroom environment and using them during conference presentations. This is an aside from the usual purpose of videotaping a class, i.e. review and remedial work. In the event a tape is used outside the classroom, the teacher should get written permission from all persons shown on that particular segment of the videotape.

One more ethical issue addressed the "boot-leg" videotaping of classes, either at the instructor's location or another one. Because technology is so advanced and our students are much more adept at using equipment, it is relatively easy for unauthorized persons to make videotapes of sessions.

Data/Media Manipulation

Once material is transmitted via the live, two-way interactive television lines, it is available for videotaping at many of the sites "on line" for that session. Because of the ease which which data can be manipulated, material revisions can be an advantage or a disadvantage. A faculty member can update and revise recorded materials; however, the disadvantage is that unauthorized persons can also manipulate information, especially when it is video recorded. Either taping over the original material or "piecing together" (often called editing) a new videotape can result in new material being prepared — by the instructor or some unauthorized person.

Reuse of Videotapes

On occasion, institutions have rebroadcast entire courses in subsequent years. The faculty member who designed, developed, and delivered the course was videotaped each session and may (or may not) have been informed that the course would be rebroadcast in later quarters, semesters, or years.

What are the ethical issues here? The faculty member knew each session was being videotaped, but was not told of the intent to broadcast the course again at a later time. It seems the ethical issue at hand here is the use of the videotape while the faculty member received no remuneration during subsequent years during which time the course is being rebroadcast. The rationale to rebroadcast rather than offer the course again with a "live" instructor may be due to budgetary reductions and pressure to increase revenues.

An issue which is important to post-secondary education faculty is the use of course videotapes to provide input to administration for retention, promotion, and tenure decisions. This can be especially worrisome if the faculty member was a new user of the ITV system and experienced difficulties with the system or had

evaluations which were lower than usual because of student dissatisfaction with the ITV technology.

Reception of Signals

Normally, a person would expect to pay a fee for ITV courses or events, whether in the form of registration fees or tuition. By gaining unauthorized access to transmission, the user is skirting on the edge of illegal behavior. Frequently no-charge programs or courses are available, with the understanding no fee will be charged. In that case, the receiver should not turn around and charge the participants for this transmission.

Another form of unauthorized reception is an institution which pays the appropriate participation fee but shares the signal with other locations in the area via an outgoing system. Although this approach is not highly ethical, it can be justified by one definition of distance education: a classroom without walls. Needless to say, one person's definition of a classroom may be greatly different from another person's definition. Networking is another example of this type of reception.

Transmission of Signals

Transmission and reception of signals are very closely tied together. Some institutions have the capability for down linking transmissions and simultaneously rebroadcasting to an entire system — with or without the permission of the originating group. Once again, it is questionable whether fees can and should be charged to the other locations when signals are transmitted to other locations.

Class Size

In just about all teaching situations, class size is an issue. When class size is determined prior to registration, a cap is set at 15, 25, 40, or some such number. The question arises, then, whether an ITV class with a cap of 20 students means a maximum of 20 students at each of the locations or a cumulative total of 20 students from all sites. Total count or count at each site can be an interpretation problem for some people, but the instructor my look unfavorably at a class intended for 25 now has 75 enrollees.

Access to Library Resources

Outreach is becoming quite important to many institutions, to the point some have included this activity as part of the institutional mission. As outreach increases, especially as it applies to ITV, questions about library resources and access will continue to grow. If students do not have access to on-campus or off-campus

library resources, can the same assignments be required of them Will the course standards to compromised to accommodate the lack of access to resources and services? Will the integrity of the course grade be in question if students take course via ITV?

Displacement of Teachers

Concern has been expressed that ITV will replace teachers. The intent of ITV is to make accessible information and courses which would not be available otherwise to students. Although ITV saves travel costs and time, it is not without cost. The system costs money, so administrators and school districts will want to utilize the systems whenever possible. However, as school budgets continue to be scrutinized and cut, teacher displacement is a major concern of teachers, teacher training institutions, and potential teachers. Displacement is always a possibility; however, program restructuring or additional course offerings may be a positive impact of implementing ITV in a school.

Marketing of Programs

As with any new or existing academic program, marketing is often necessary to either build or maintain enrollments. This is especially critical as administrators seek ways to reduce budgets, frequently by eliminating courses, programs, or departments which have low student enrollment. Whose responsibility is this marketing endeavor — the school's or the instructor's? Another ethical question which needs to be considered is whether marketing efforts to "sell" ITV courses to students, done by highlighting the advantages and downplaying its disadvantages, is fair to potential students. Students need to know both the strengths and weaknesses of ITV before committing to a course or program. Or does *caveat emptor* apply — let the buyer beware!

Admission of Students

ITV requires a special commitment on the part of the student. Self motivation, self-directedness, and psychological readiness are necessary for success. Students need to be aware of these special criteria prior to enrolling in ITV classes. In some cases, students can be counseled prior to the start of an ITV course to prepare them for the differences. Whose responsibility is this counseling?

Training Faculty to Use ITV

There is a need for training faculty to use the ITV system. Some pre-service activities teacher students about ITV, while in-service sessions may be provided to teachers already in the school system. It is imperative, however, that teachers look at ITV training as more than just "pushing a few buttons" so the information is

transmitted. Appropriate time for training as well as course and materials development is critical. It would seem appropriate for components of ITV training to include: a brief overview of the system, course design and development, materials design and development, operation of the equipment, computer interaction with ITV, and the administrative, legal, and ethical issues which must be addressed.

Selection of Faculty

Selection of faculty to teach via the ITV system is not as easy as it might initially appear. Some faculty, knowledgeable in their field and the course content, are more comfortable in a traditional classroom environment than in an ITV room, complete with all the technology that accompanies teaching via ITV. A major question to be considered is whether the non-technical faculty member should be required to teach via ITV, especially if that person has indicated concern about using this medium of course delivery.

Characteristics of effective ITV instructors may include: an ease with and understanding of technology, a willingness to take a risk with a new methods of instruction, willingness (if necessary) to redesign courses to include less lecture and more experiential classroom activities, ability and willingness to design or redesign course materials to fit the ITV format (transparencies, computer-delivered presentations, etc.), troubleshooting capabilities, and flexibility in the event of equipment failure.

Another issue within the category of selection of faculty is whether the ITV opportunity is viewed by administration, department heads, and faculty as a plum or a prune — a reward for work well done or a punishment. Or, is the driving force of faculty selection program needs, preferences/wishes, or additional remuneration or time for ITV teaching.

Student Access to Instructors

With ITV classes (according to most definitions of distance education), the faculty member and at least some of the students are located at separate locations. When that is the case, additional effort must be made on the part of the faculty member to make student access or contact possible. Experienced ITV instructors have found that although this may be a cumbersome task, faculty access is critical. Because students are usually located a distance away from the instructor, "dropping in" is not usually a possibility. Other options, however, include establishing a standard time for office hours to be held via the ITV system and/or establishing e-mail communication access whenever possible.

Conclusion

ITV has been a tremendous boon to the field of education for a number of reasons. It has, however, tempted professionals to "skirt the edge" of both the law and ethics. Technology, the ease of operation, and the vast number of technology-oriented people permit legal and ethical violations or "crossing the fine line" possible. It is better to lean more towards the conservative side when contemplating ways to enhance classroom instruction by using ITV.